

For instance, if the highest absorption the meditator attained is the third concentration, mundane and supramundane innate afflictions of the Third Concentration Level as well as supramundane innate afflictions of the Desire Realm, First Concentration Level, and Second Concentration Level arise. Yet neither mundane and supramundane innate afflictions of any of the levels *above* the Third Concentration nor *mundane* innate afflictions of any of the levels *below* the Third Concentration can manifest in his continuum.

Likewise, if the highest absorption the meditator attained is the nothingness absorption, mundane and supramundane afflictions of the Nothingness Level as well as supramundane innate afflictions of the Desire Realm, the four Form Realm Levels, and the first two Formless Realm Levels arise. But neither innate afflictions of the Peak of Cyclic Existence Level nor mundane innate afflictions that pertain to any of the levels below the Nothingness Level can manifest in his continuum. [See Chart 2]

Rebirth in one of the nine levels

Regarding rebirth in one of the nine levels, someone who has not attained any concentration can only be reborn in the Desire Realm. A meditator other than a foe-destroyer or an Arya Bodhisattva who has attained only the first concentration (but not the second) in *this* life is necessarily reborn in the First Concentration Level in his *next* life (unless the concentration degenerates before he dies). Hence the meditator who has attained only the first concentration is either a person of the Desire Realm or a person of the First Concentration Level because in this life he is a person of the Desire Realm and in his next life he is reborn in the First Concentration Level.

If a meditator other than a foe-destroyer and an Arya Bodhisattva has attained the second concentration (but not the third), he is either a person of the Desire Realm, the First Concentration, or the Second Concentration Level. Then when he dies (and if the second concentration has not degenerated) he is necessarily reborn in the Second Concentration Level.

Similarly, if a meditator other than a foe-destroyer and an Arya Bodhisattva has attained the third concentration (but not the fourth concentration), he is either a person of the Desire Realm, the First Concentration, Second Concentration, or Third Concentration Level, and when he dies (without the third concentration having degenerated) he is necessarily reborn in the Third Concentration Level.

The same applies to the fourth concentration and the four formless absorptions.

The reason for this is that one of the eight meditative absorptions can newly be attained only by a person in any of the levels *below* the respective absorption. Therefore, the first concentration can newly be attained only by someone in the Desire Realm and not by a person who resides in the First Concentration Level. The second concentration can newly be attained only by a person in the Desire Realm or the First Concentration Level but not by someone in the Second Concentration Level, and so forth.

Please note that although a meditator other than an Arya Bodhisattva who has attained, for instance, the second concentration must have also attained the first concentration, he is not reborn in the First Concentration Level but in the Second Concentration Level because he has attained the higher and superior second concentration. Similarly, even though a meditator other than an Arya Bodhisattva who has attained the third concentration must have also attained the first and the second concentrations, he is not reborn in the First Concentration or the Second Concentration Abode but in the Third Concentration Level because he has attained the higher and superior third concentration. The same applies to the other concentrations as well as the four formless absorptions.

In some of the above explanations the phrase 'a meditator other than a foe-destroyer and an Arya Bodhisattva' is used because foe-destroyers have eliminated afflictive obstructions and thus are no longer reborn in any of the levels of Samsara, even if they have attained any of the eight meditative absorptions. Arya Bodhisattvas have reached the path of seeing and hence necessarily attained all four concentrations. Yet since they are able to choose their rebirths within Samsara they are reborn in whichever level is most beneficial to sentient beings. This means that they take rebirth either in the Desire Realm or any of the four Concentration Levels. Even though Arya Bodhisattvas may have cultivated the formless absorptions they are not born in any of the Formless Realm Levels since they are unable to benefit sentient beings in those states. They are unable to benefit sentient beings there because the only way Bodhisattvas (and even Buddhas) can benefit others is through serving as an inspiration by means of their own example and by giving advice and teachings. However, since beings in the Formless Realm lack physical bodies they are unable to be of benefit to others in this way.

<i>The meditative absorption that is newly attained</i>	<i>The level in which the newly attained meditative absorption was cultivated</i>	<i>The level in which a meditator (other than an Arya Bodhisattva) is reborn in if his newly attained meditative absorption does not degenerate and if he does not cultivate a higher absorption</i>
First concentration	The Desire Realm	The First Concentration Level
Second concentration	The Desire Realm or First Concentration Level	The Second Concentration Level
Third concentration	The Desire Realm, First or Second Concentration Level	The Third Concentration Level
Fourth concentration	The Desire Realm, First, Second, or Third Concentration Level	The Fourth Concentration Level
Limitless space	The Desire Realm or one of the four Form Realm Levels	The Limitless Space Level
Limitless consciousness	The Desire Realm, one of the four Form Realm Levels, or the Limitless Space Level	The Limitless Consciousness Level
Nothingness	The Desire Realm, one of the four Form Realm Levels, the Limitless Space Level, or the Nothingness Level	The Nothingness Level
Peak of cyclic existence	The Desire Realm, one of the four Form Realm Levels, or one of the first three Formless Realm Levels	The Peak of Cyclic Existence Level

The reasons for cultivating meditative absorptions

The reasons for developing any of the meditative absorptions differ for Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Many followers of non-Buddhist traditions believe the different levels of the Form and Formless Realms to be states of liberation.

Some non-Buddhists may assert, for instance, that the First Concentration Level is a state of liberation and therefore cultivate the first meditative absorption in order to be reborn in its corresponding level. Or they may assert that one of the Formless Levels, for instance the Nothingness Level, is a state of liberation, and thus cultivate the nothingness absorption and the meditative absorptions that precede the nothingness absorption in order to be reborn in the Nothingness Level. Others may regard the Peak of Cyclic Existence Level to be a state of liberation, cultivate the four absorptions of the Form Realm and the four absorptions of the Formless Realm and take rebirth there.

As its name suggests the Peak of Cyclic Existence Level is the highest level of existence within Samsara, and unless one attains liberation, one cannot transcend that level. Yet, due to afflictions and karmic imprints meditators are not able stay in that level forever. Instead, at some point their absorptions will degenerate and they will be reborn in lower levels.

Unlike non-Buddhists, Buddhist practitioners accept the eight levels of the Form and Formless Realms to be within Samsara and therefore to be in the nature of suffering.

Nonetheless, Buddhist practitioners who have not generated renunciation may still cultivate the different meditative absorptions motivated by attachment to rebirth in one of the eight levels of the Form and Formless Realms.

